



GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH AT VARNA

BULGARIA MISSION

METHODIST EPISCOPAL
CHURCH



A BULGAR
VILLAGER



THE REV. ELMER E. COUNT,
Superintendent of Bulgaria Mission

The Bulgaria Mission

OF THE
METHODIST EPISCOPAL
CHURCH

BY
MISS DORA DAVIS



BULGARIAN SHEPHERDS

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THE BULGARIA MISSION

THE BULGARIA OF TO-DAY

IT would be difficult, perhaps, for the average American to form an accurate conception of the Bulgaria of to-day. During its recent newspaper notoriety, some persons who are especially interested in the curious corners of the earth have probably learned that Bulgaria, as now organized, lies in the middle, northern and southern parts of the Balkan peninsula, with Roumania on the north, Servia on the west, the Black Sea on the east, and on the south the narrow strip of territory still left to the Ottoman Government in Europe, and properly called European Turkey.

The Danube forms the country's northern boundary to a point near the Black Sea where the bend of the river northward is marked by the city of Silistria. The Rhodope range of mountains, with spurs varying from low ridges toward the sea, to snowy Rileski spires on the west, forms the frontier toward Turkey. Within the territory so

The Danube and the Mountains

bounded lies the Balkan principality of Bulgaria. The capital is at Sofia on the southern side of the "Stara Planina," or main Balkan range, near the western extremity of the country.

The area in square miles is a little more than half that of the State of Illinois. It is everywhere dominated by the Balkan Mountains, the main range of which runs nearly due east and west till, near the western border, it turns sharply to the north and itself becomes the Servian frontier, so filling the land with its spurs and secondary ranges that even

Dominated by the Balkans

from the widest valleys some mountain heights are always visible. Along the Danube and toward the sea there is a strip of level bottom-land, but this slopes abruptly to the Balkan hills and there, as in the broad, central valley at Plovdiv (Philippopolis), the horizon is ever bounded by gray, craggy Balkan rocks.

Almost the entire northern boundary falls south of the forty-fourth degree of latitude. The southern boundary extends nearly to the forty-first degree of latitude. Within these narrow geographical limits, by reason of its physical features, the principality possesses a fine, healthy climate with great variety of temperature. Except in the higher mountain altitudes, the temperature in winter rarely falls below zero (Fahrenheit), and the summer heat is always tempered by mountain breezes. In addition to its

**A Healthy
Climate**



Women at the Fountain

rivers, the land is filled with mountain streams and springs, many of which are mineral and are valued for medicinal baths.

The history of Bulgaria began early. To say sometime between the third and seventh centuries would be sufficiently accurate for the present purpose. At that time, Slavic tribes moving westward from Asia drove out the people who were then settled in the peninsula. One of these Asiatic tribes, the "Bulgari," permanently gave its name to the territory. But the peoples who founded the first Bulgarian empire were composed of many tribal families, although all of them were Slavs.

**The Slavic
Migration**

Their history during those early centuries is nearly all traditional. Some authentic relics, such as carved tablets and inscriptions, record the exploits of their Tsars. It is known, moreover, that

The Height of Achievement the first empire reached the height of its glory under the Tsar Simeon. Bulgarian school boys still study about the marvelous deeds of that great Tsar.

After Bulgaria lost her independence, having been conquered by Basilius II, A. D. 1018, she became a part of the Greek empire, and a period of captivity followed. For two centuries thereafter the Bulgars were dependent, but their national spirit was preserved. Later, their patriotic brothers, the Asenide, led the nation in a revolt. Freedom was again secured, and a second empire established. This

The Second Period of Greatness was the second of Bulgaria's "great" periods, a time when her Tsars enlarged her boundaries until these were "washed by three seas." Wars were carried on often to the walls of Constantinople, and one of the Greek emperors was actually taken prisoner.

Even in those early times, the Bulgars cared for something else beside war. One of their emperors, Asen II, was especially progressive. He helped his people to make a start in primitive agriculture and in commerce; he dabbled also in architecture, and, in brief, tried his hand at every art then known. His commercial ambitions went far beyond the

A Progressive Emperor Bulgarian boundaries, and under his patronage business continued to develop until international commercial relations were established. A Venetian consul lived in Varna, and Bulgaria surpassed her nearer neighbors in civilization.

But Asen II died in 1241, and the less powerful Tsars who succeeded him were unable either to rule or to protect the empire. It suffered the usual fate of empires in similar conditions.

Under Servian Vassalage Servia, a neighboring nation, also Slavic as to race, produced a more powerful king, who promptly entered the arena of activities, and Bulgaria once again became dependent. Since the Servian vassalage, which began about the middle of the fourteenth century, Bulgaria has never known complete independence. Almost immediately after the revolt from Servian rule, Turkish encroachment upon Bulgaria developed into open invasion, and by the latter part of the fourteenth century Bulgaria had lost the

last remnant of her freedom. Thereafter she learned all the sorrows involved in Turkish oppression.

During the long period of "Turkish times" Bulgaria all but lost her very existence as a nation. As far as possible every record or monument of former independence was obliterated by the Turk.

Turkish The beauty of wooded hills was turned into a treeless waste.
Misrule Highways of commerce became paths of plunder. Christian churches became Moslem mosques.



On a City Street

Attempts to revolt served only to intensify the miseries of Turkish bondage. The Crimean War left Bulgaria with her woes unmitigated.

Woes and The Turk was still unconquered either by arms or by public
Atrocities opinion. Conditions grew worse. Every effort of the Bulgarians to regain their freedom was punished in true Turkish style. Bulgaria experienced all the atrocities later practiced upon the Armenians and now occurring in Macedonia. Her people lived in constant insecurity with regard to life and property.

There seemed to be no hope for the suffering nation until that culmination of their troubles, uprisings and revolts which gave

Freedom Russia the desired excuse for another move toward Constanti-
Secured nople. Then, finally, at the end of the Russo-Turkish War, having gained the world's sympathy, partly through her own efforts, aided also by newspaper correspondents, but chiefly through the fearless words of Mr. Gladstone, Bulgaria secured her freedom by the treaties of San Stefano and of Berlin. It was the first real freedom that she had known for five centuries.

In the winning of this freedom Bulgaria's part as an armed force was small. It could not be otherwise, for she had existed in a state of slavery worse than that of the Egyptian. But those

Bulgaria's Share of her people who managed to escape the Turkish
in the War ferocity gave incalculable assistance in such ways as were open to them. Regarding the invading Russians and Roumanians as their champions and liberators, the Bulgarian peasantry furnished food, guided the troops, and kept the roads.



A Village House

When the horses failed, women dragged artillery, and even children carried water on the battlefield, giving without stint such service as they could to those through whose larger work liberty was finally to come.

And liberty, such as it was, did come. The treaties establishing peace made Bulgaria an "autonomous and tributary principality under the suzerainty of his Imperial Majesty the Sultan." Such **Tribute to the Sultan** it is to-day. The suzerainty means practically the annual tribute to Turkey, then stipulated. By the treaties Eastern Roumelia was made more subject to the Sultan. Later, by voluntary union with Bulgaria proper, that "province" became a part of the principality under the name of Southern Bulgaria, which includes that part of Bulgarian territory lying south of the main Balkan range.

United Bulgaria makes its own laws and, in theory at least, decides its own policies. There is a reasonable safety within all its borders, save here and there in exceptionally wild mountain districts, **Theoretical Autonomy** where robbers make traveling at times very dangerous. The authorities, however, make an attempt to punish criminals, and any citizen, whatever his nationality, may live in a Bulgarian village or city without fear. There are exceptional cases where Protestants suffer sometimes, but in general the rule of safety holds good. Even the Jew can find security in Bulgaria.

The Turk rules no longer. His magistrates no longer levy nor extort "voluntary contributions." There are no longer "painted hills" along the highway—places of terror to the traveler—having taken their names from the tragedies enacted on their green slopes.

If the Bulgarian farmer could abandon the century-old custom of living in the overcrowded village—a condition necessary when all his care was required to defend himself and his family from his **Overcrowded Villages** Turkish rulers—he might live much more healthfully upon his own land, instead of existing, as he does, at a distance of perhaps two or three hours' walk from his fields.

By force of treaty terms and by its own constitution United Bulgaria is a "principality." Ferdinand, its second prince, is the executive head. Its constitution is modeled after that of Belgium. A National Assembly of one House, with members elected by popular suffrage, enacts the statutory laws. In the matter of executive administration

**United
Bulgaria a
"Principality"**

the prince is assisted by a ministry with departments of Foreign Affairs, State, Finance, War, Ways, Agriculture and Commerce, Education and Judiciary. The Department of Roads and Ways has charge also of the railroad and telegraph systems, and of the postoffice. The judiciary plan is that of inferior and superior courts. Criminal trial is conducted by judge and jury.



Young Men
Awaiting an
Army
Examination

**National and
Private Schools**

The schools are uniform and non-coeducational, except in the first four or primary years. Private schools are permitted only under very strict regulations. Like national schools, they are subject to the supervision of government inspectors; their teachers must hold a gymnasium diploma, at least, and no one is allowed to teach in them without permission from the Minister of Education.

**Material
Resources**

The material resources are as yet unexploited. Development was virtually prohibited during Turkish rule. The land was the only resource left to the miserable inhabitants, and even its forest growth was destroyed. Agriculture has always been the chief industry, but it is still in a primitive state. The farmer plows with a crooked stick tipped with a bit of iron. His wife leads

the ox or buffalo team, while he guides the plow. After the quartet has slowly and laboriously plowed a field, it bears but slight resemblance to the "plowed ground" of American prairies.

So it is with every detail of agricultural work. Everything is done in the most improved style of long-past centuries. "The sower goes forth to sow," scattering the grain through his fingers over the scarcely stirred soil. His field of grain in early summer is a thing of beauty, with its profusion of scarlet poppies and blue cornflowers. The Bulgarian farmer does not cultivate his field in this way because he particularly desires the beauty, but simply because it has never occurred to him that where a wild poppy

**Primitive
Agriculture**



Off to the Harvest Field

is growing wheat is not. So he literally allows his wheat and tares to thrive together, and later spends long hours in sifting his grain.

When harvest time comes the farmer practically lives in his fields. Whole families leave the villages for days at a time. They sleep at night under the friendly stars, and toil through the long, hot days, cutting the grain with little hand-sickles precisely as their forefathers did. The land produces all the usual varie-

**In Harvest
Time**

ties of crops in an abundance entirely out of proportion to the cultivation it receives. Properly treated, it would be capable of yielding "record" crops, for even in its unfertilized, half-cultivated state it produces surprisingly well. Land is sold at moderate prices, and is usually owned in small holdings.

**Fertility of
the Land**

The prices of agricultural products are steadily advancing as the country is opened up by the railroad. Already the demand for food supplies from the not far distant European cities has caused certain staple products to treble in price. With this constant demand from easy shipping distance for all kinds of agricultural products, it is but reasonable to predict a future for the country in this, its special industry, alone.

**Advancing
Prices**

**Industrial
Opportunity**

Sometime Bulgaria will doubtless awaken to the opportunities for industrial advancement that lie unused within her borders. Just outside of a little inland city, on the banks of the Osum, is a fine, modern flour mill. Equipped with a turbine and with auxiliary steam power; furnished with the best of modern machinery, and lighted by electricity, it turns out a superior grade of flour which finds a ready market. A company of enterprising Bulgarians owns the plant, but its entire equipment is foreign. There is iron in the mountains of Bulgaria, awaiting the furnace, but the machinery for this mill is purchased in Germany, and a German worker is imported to superintend the making of the flour. If any part of the machinery breaks, this man must make all the repairs or suspend the business of the mill while he sends to a Viennese factory. This fact is noted merely to illustrate the general situation. The art

**Unused
Water Power**

of manufacturing, too, as yet almost untouched in Bulgaria, awaits the awakening of the people. The land is full of unused water power. Raw products are shipped to other countries to be made into articles needed at home, and the Bulgarian consumer pays a high duty on them every time he buys.

But it will not always be so. The vitalizing power of twenty-five years of self-government is already showing its influence. Bulgaria is beginning to work out, by present day methods, the problem of her industrial salvation. The railroads are opening the country in all directions. A trans-continental line, directly connecting London with

Railroads Constantinople, via North Sea steamers, passes through Bulgaria. Branch railway lines give access to Shumen, Varna,

Rustchuk, Tirnova and Pleven. Local electric lines are also being projected. The country undoubtedly has a future before it. The question is, shall it be a wholly material one, or shall it have for the people something more than a mere money value?



A Wayside Inn

Religion has played no insignificant part in the history of Bulgaria. At the beginning of his national life the Bulgar was evidently an idolater. Frankly holding faith in innumerable spirits inhabiting the woods, fields, mountains and streams, he held crude carnivals to Nature, reveled in orgies of sacrifice, and worshiped gods in every bosky glade and dell. When he became "Christianized," the method by which it was accomplished was characteristic of the time. Tradition ascribes a part of the Christianizing influence to two monks (brothers), who worked with genuine missionary zeal. But the greater part of the "conversion" was effected by royal decree enforced by the sword.

Early Religion

The Bulgar did not relish the process. He preferred his bogies and nymphs, and was ready to fight in order to preserve his superstitions. For a time the conflict wavered between Christianity and heathenism; now it was urged forward by some Bulgarian monarch who wished, by professing conversion, to gain some

A Process of Transition

point of vantage over the Greeks in the south; and again encouraged by some one of the Greek emperors who was impelled by the double motive of acquiring territory and converts at the same time.

But at length the sword of Christianity conquered. The Bulgar gave up his sacrifices and retained his spirits, both good and bad.

"Christianized" he became, and so he remained through the long centuries of the "Turkish times." And "Christian"

**A Formal
Christianity**

he is to-day, nationally and individually. Nationally in that his Church, similar in creed and organization to other branches of the Greek Church, is actually a "State" Church, its



Forty Days of Walling at a Grave

Bishops and Holy Synod possessing and exercising political functions and power; and individually in that the Bulgar, verbally at least, strenuously maintains his "Christianity," the real meaning of this assertion being that he is not Moslem. He was baptized

The Sacraments

by the priest in the first week of his life. He duly pays for a prayer and takes the sacrament at Easter. He is

married in the church where he has attended services a few times, and has kissed the icons. His children are baptized there, and when he dies the priest, for a consideration, will chant a burial service and

the bell will be tolled as many times as the surviving relatives are willing to pay for. Thus is completed the round of his religious life.

His opinions and beliefs have no part whatever in his "religiou."

In fact, the nation is divided into two great classes: the ignorant peasant class unable to read or write, religiously inclined but without the Gospel; and the educated class knowing and despising the follies of superstition, but largely socialistic, infidel, or skeptical.

Two Great Classes The average Bulgarian of to-day, while strenuously insisting on his "Christianity," does not connect with it any thought of personal responsibility to God. As for certain religious duties, he realizes that they exist, but he wants the priest to attend to them. Is not the priest paid to do this? His home contains no Bible. "Of what use would it be?" he asks. It is in the ancient Slavic language, which he does not use and probably cannot read. His children are not taught at home. Do they not study at school "the law of God"? And is not the teacher required to take them to church? To be sure while the program of school includes "the Law of God," a mass of tradition and church ordinances takes the place of the Bible as a text-book, and the teacher ridicules the very things that he requires his pupils to learn.

As a result of all this, Bulgaria stands to-day among the nations that have a nominal religion and a State Church, founded originally on the Bible, but in the meantime her people live in ignorance of the Gospel. Though eager to acquire a higher degree of Western civilization, they continually fail to recognize the underlying cornerstone of the thing they seek. They frankly admire English truthfulness, often giving to both Englishman and American greater credit than they deserve, but they are not willing to admit that faith has anything to do with the formation of character.

Ignorance of the Gospel Evangelical work in Bulgaria is beset by constant and varied difficulties. A deep-set superstition and prejudice, a distrust and fear of whatever is new, prevent the ready acceptance of a faith that implies the absolute futility of everything the people had hitherto believed. It is a striking fact that the Bulgarian women are more difficult to win for Christ than are the men. The simple-minded men and women

of the villages, and the women everywhere, cling to their old-time faith in the efficacy of priests and icons. They pin their faith to the fancy that they are a "Christian" nation, and that therefore all existing evil will be vanquished in some way. They often have a shrewd idea that all is not just as the priest declares it to be, but change is not easy to a people who have practiced the same rites for centuries. If left to themselves they might be more successfully convinced of the truth of the Gospel. With a full knowledge of the loss of revenues and power involved in a change of this kind, the priests tell the Bulgarians that the Protestants are bad, that they are without God, and are doomed to eternal punishment.



How the Baby is Carried

Unable to comprehend an unselfish motive, the Bulgarians firmly believe that behind the missionary and his work lies a political or commercial element. This idea prevails everywhere, not only among the ignorant who have no conception of a Church other than that of the State; but the educated class, who ought to know better, persist also in believing that the American missionary is merely a tool of his government, and that the "propaganda," though ostensibly religious, is at bottom really political. No matter how carefully a missionary may explain to a Bulgarian the true relation between Church and State as it exists in Protestant countries, the Bulgarian, even though he be an educated man, seldom believes such statements in their entirety. Not that the missionary's veracity is wholly discredited. His auditor will probably listen to him with respect, and even with the magnanimous admission that he intends no untruth. But in the end his auditor will tell him that he does not know what he is talking about, for the Bulgarian simply cannot comprehend these statements and charitably thinks that the missionary has been misinformed. This almost universal idea makes doubly difficult the progress of evangelical Christianity.

Unselfishness

Incomprehensible

Mental

Reservations

The Bulgarian who overcomes his native prejudice and listens to the Protestant preacher is either convinced or unconvinced. If the latter, he usually takes the argumentative, socialistic tack. The preacher must have lively wits and use them vigorously in order to hold his own with the Bulgarian. If convinced, he is still far from being won. He will listen with all seriousness, and will say at the end: "This is all true. It is better than what we have. But it is not for us, not for us." He may go a step further and say that his children may accept the new doctrine if they wish, but as for himself he persistently falls back on the idea that religion is simply a sort of system, one kind of which will answer his needs as well as another. Any sort of change is foreign to his life habit; accordingly, he shrugs his shoulders and dismisses the whole matter.

Wise, tactful and divinely aided must be the preacher who will finally reach this man's soul and win it to loving loyalty to Christ.

WORK OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL MISSION

In this quaint corner of Europe, with its natural beauty rivaling even that of Switzerland, with its three and one-half millions of Oriental people who live to-day the life of centuries long past, Asiatic in immovableness and weight of tradition, but dashed here and there with a faint tinge of Western progress, here in this land of pagan Christianity, Methodism has planted a Mission. As a phase of mission work it is probably unique. Some study of the "Bulgarian question" is necessary in order to reach an understanding of the condition of the Mission as it is to-day. It was opened as a Mission in 1857, was twice abandoned or "practically suspended," and for many years was under the direction of a superintendent who did not reside in the country. Later, and during the past decade, until the recent appointment of the Rev. Elmer E. Count, in the spring of 1905, the Bulgarian Mission was without a resident superintendent, having a roster of only twelve missionaries sent out by the Parent Board, six of whom have

less than a six-year term of service to their credit, and two of whom with their families, have less than one year. The career of this Mission has probably no parallel in the history of the organized work of the Missionary Society. In the face of discouragement where

**A Persistent
Mission**

encouragement is most needed, in the face of persecution and bitterest opposition on the field, this Mission has persisted and has held its ground, a fact that in itself is most significant to those acquainted with the untoward conditions.



A Bulgarian Methodist Family

The opposition from the State Orthodox Church, met by the Protestant faith, is intense. As the creed of the Orthodox Church is founded on the Bible (although the Book itself is sealed to its adherents, being written in ancient Slavic) our Church recognizes this as a fact of Christian origin, and regards its baptism as Christian. Persons entering the membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church are received without administration of rite of baptism, all having been baptized in infancy.

**Opposition of the
Orthodox Church**

In place of the prevalent notion of a wholly formal religion, the Protestant Church offers the Gospel of salvation by faith, and all over

MAP

of The Principality of Bulgaria.

1:2,000,000.



Macedonia.

Lovitch, 24/7 - 1905

Epworth

EUROPE TURKEY.

Boundary Line
County Boundaries
Railroads
Government Highways
Roads

Bulgaria there are communities of Christians who know in whom they have believed, and who are trying to lift up Christ before the eyes of their neighbors.

Not all of these converts to Protestantism have left their Church for ours. In some cases, even when they have expressed a desire to

Vital Religion versus Church Membership

do so, they have been advised not to leave their own Church. Strange as this may seem to those at home who sometimes count missionary success by the number of enrolled church members reported on the field, it has been found wise in dealing with these people, whose common notion is that the "writing" of their names, i. e., the fact of church membership, constitutes the sum total of care needed for their soul's salvation. Since the preaching of the Gospel in the Bulgaria Mission, persons under its influence have lived consistent Christian lives, and have died testifying to their faith in Christ, and are now, as we believe, in heaven, although they never left their own Church, and their influence over others was probably better for that reason. Had they come into our Church, it would have been conclusive proof to those around them that we, too, share their inbred notion that mere church-membership saves.

There are others who, having come to know Christ and feeling that it is better to suffer the ostracism involved in uniting with the Protestants, have left their own Church and come into the

An Extra Long Probation Period

fellowship of the Protestant Church. Such persons are rarely received into our Church immediately after conversion. A convert here, unless he belongs to a Protestant family, is rarely received into the usual probationary relation; but undergoes a preliminary period of probation for about a year, or more. Converts are never received on probation merely upon expressing such a desire to their pastor.

The result is a tested body of membership in the Mission, a matter of vital importance where, as here, every individual in the connection is at all times subjected to vigilant scrutiny, and is liable

A Tested Membership

at any time to suffer malicious attack. To the credit of Methodism and of its system, it may be said that our members stand the test. A people having neither faith in God nor in one another believe implicitly in the honor and faith of the Protestants.

Clean Every Whit In a country where wine and all intoxicating drinks are universally used, where every man and boy and many of the women are addicted to tobacco, and often use language that is foul in the extreme, to be known as a Protestant in such a country implies, without reserve, that the individual neither drinks, chews, nor uses impure language. In a nation where honor is only a word, and truth is but a name, the word of a Protestant is accepted unquestioningly.

Emigration But these facts do not wholly account for the slow increase of membership in the Bulgaria Mission. Another influence is constantly diminishing the number of applicants and of those already received. Emigration from so small a country as Bulgaria makes no appreciable impression in the United States, but it is constantly coming about. An unfortunate governmental policy makes individual effort difficult, at its best, and a grievously heavy taxation puts upon the small land-owner (the farming class) an almost prohibitory handicap. The tendency, therefore, is to look upon the town as the only place where one can earn a living, while it is difficult to obtain employment there because of the almost total absence of manufactures and capital. A large percentage of the young men in Bulgaria feel, with reason, that their only hope for opportunity lies in emigration. Knowing the truth of the situation, even a missionary cannot always find it in his heart to tell these youths that they must stay, and thus emigration frequently takes from us the best blood of our churches.

Educational Missions Educational work, that *sine qua non* of progressive organized Missions, has experienced in Bulgaria all the ups and downs of an unsettled policy. The flourishing Girls' School of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society at Lovetch shows what can be done in the matter of evangelical training for Bulgarian girls.

No School for Boys At present there is no educational work for boys, greatly as it is needed. The Boys' School, opened in 1881, and maintained in spite of early difficulties, including imprisonments and uprisings against the Protestant schools, after changes from place to place, was finally closed upon the return to America of the last superintendent. During the four years of his administration,

Bishop Vincent, seeing the dangers that threaten the Church when no opportunity for education is available except in the national schools, where the teachers openly scoff at the religious tenets taught, and realizing the need for educational privileges in an atmosphere of evangelical faith, constantly and strenuously urged the necessity of opening a school for boys in the Bulgaria Mission. There is ample room for such a school. Every year boys from the territory of our Church go over to the schools of the American Board, south of the Balkans,



Methodist Parsonage at Village of Nihilce

in sufficient numbers to form a nucleus and to demonstrate the need for a school of our own. The missionaries send favorable reports of the work of these boys, and we do not like to lose them.

The Bulgaria Mission and its people cannot fairly be judged on the basis of statistics previous to the last decade. The church records of

**Inadequate
Statistics**

earlier years were incomplete and inadequate. During the past ten years, in spite of its handicapped conditions, the Mission has shown a degree of advance that would do credit even to a more favorably situated people. Eight of the sixteen churches and parsonages belonging to our Mission have been erected within this period. During the same time, the gain in membership has equaled that of the preceding thirty-seven years.

WORK OF THE WOMAN'S FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY

The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society began its work in Bulgaria in 1884, when Miss Linna Schenck was sent to take charge of a Girls' School, opened by Mr. D. C. Challis, at Lovetch. Miss Schenck was finely qualified and set herself with untiring devotion to the task of developing the school and training the girls. But there were serious difficulties to be overcome. The Orthodox Church authorities were intensely hostile and did everything in their power to prevent the success of this school. Government officials openly opposed the enterprise, and refused to grant permits to the teachers. School inspectors continually harrassed the workers, and pub-

Early Opposition



Girls' School, Lovetch



Woman's Foreign Missionary Society Home, Lovetch

steadily held to its original plan and purpose, that is, to train girls for a useful Christian life by means of a home boarding-school. It follows the course of studies prescribed by the Minister of Education, and thereby conforms to

A Flourishing School

lic prejudice and superstition combined in the effort to frustrate the plan of a clean, wholesome, home school for Bulgarian girls.

In spite of opposition, however, the school has flourished. It has

governmental requirements. But thorough systematic courses in Bible Study and in English are added to the curriculum. French, the official language of the country, is also taught, as it is required in all schools.

The school property is admirably situated on high ground, overlooking the little city of Lovetch, and covers about an acre of land.

Crowded It is neatly walled on all sides. The buildings are crowded
Buildings to the limit of capacity. One is devoted to school and dormitory rooms, with kitchen, dining-room, and two class-rooms on the basement floor, which is partly underground. The second building provides a shelter for the two missionaries, four of the Bulgarian teachers, the man-servant and the cook. Several outbuildings for laundry purposes complete the "plant." Domestic work is required of every boarding-school pupil. The girls are divided into several groups, according to the amount of each kind of work to be done, and the work of each group is changed each month.

The personnel of the school varies from year to year as classes graduate and new girls take their places. Usually a large proportion come from orthodox homes. Although Bulgarian homes
The School forbid pupils to "change their religion" while attending
Personnel school, these girls often become so completely transformed



Misses Blackburn and Davis with the Graduating Class of 1905,
Lovetch Girls' School

under the influence of the religious life of the school that they voluntarily take a stand for Christ, although they are not permitted to unite with the Protestant Church.

Some of these girls from orthodox homes become, as we believe, truly converted and possess a living faith in the truths of God, and when they die, what Wesley said of his people may be said of them, that "they die well." Those of the girls who have completed the course of study and have gone out from this school, are scattered far and wide, for they come from all parts of the country and from different social ranks. Some have married preachers in the Mission; others are teachers; and the majority of those who have settled in homes of their own are demonstrating to the nation the value of the training received at our school.

There is no discrimination in the school in the matter of social rank. A village peasant girl does her work by the side of the daughter of a merchant, professional man, or member of the National Assembly. All wear the regulation uniform—a plain dark-blue dress and black apron.

There is most convincing evidence that the influence of the school in the formation of character is permanent. In the mere matter of cleanliness, the difference is noticeable. A village girl who has attended the Lovetch School even for one year will not be content to live thereafter in dirt and uncleanness, as she had lived before.

The school is conducted on a very inexpensive scale. A few scholarships are provided by the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, the policy being to give help where most needed, and to encourage self-help rather than to support the girls outright.

The school at present is seriously hampered by its cramped quarters. A new building is greatly needed, one that would accommodate at least twice as many pupils as can now be received. More girls could be cared for by the staff of teachers now employed, if there were room for them. The school holds its own in competition with the government girls' gymnasia. One of the newest, most completely equipped of these gymnasia, with an enrollment of over two hundred, had during the school year of 1904-5 only six more boarding pupils than the school at Lovetch. It is a fact

that the national boarding-schools do not win the confidence of the Bulgarians themselves. One man frankly said when sending his daughter to the mission school, "We know that our girls are safe in Lovetch."

Possibilities of Development The school shows many possibilities of development. Maintaining itself in the face of constant, even vigilant, priestly opposition, (orthodox bishops do not feel it beneath their dignity to make a personal canvass against the school among its orthodox patrons), it constantly gains ground as a safe home school for girls, it enjoys a steadily increasing local income, and it has now reached the limit of its accomodations. Its very success is its present danger, for its quarters are entirely out-



Girls' National Gymnasium at Varna

grown. In the nature of the case, institutions like this cannot remain stationary. A refusal to encourage further growth brings the certainty of losing ground.

Village Work Besides the Lovetch School, the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society maintains a teacher in one of the villages, where the members provide a building and all other running expenses. One Bible woman is kept continuously at work. The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society is represented by two missionaries, Miss Kate B. Blackburn, of Jacksonville, Illinois, who is principal of the school, and Miss Dora Davis, of Kalamazoo, Michigan.

PRESENT CONDITIONS IN THE MISSION

The work in Bulgaria is organized on Disciplinary lines. As on any other mission field, all local work must be adapted to existing conditions, but any Methodist would feel at home and would find his niche in any one of its churches. The Conference Minutes of 1905 (printed in English) report sixteen charges. During the last two years the full membership increased eighteen per cent.

Scope of the Work

Sunday schools are especially difficult to maintain. This statement read in a land of Sunday schools, sounds oddly enough, but it is a fact that must be faced in Bulgaria. The children are children as easily attracted to the Sunday schools here as children are elsewhere. But the day school teacher in order to hold his position—a government appointment—must show himself a true orthodox. He does this by inflicting prompt punishment on any boy or girl who ventures upon the forbidden ground of the Protestant Sunday school.

Sunday Schools

Although many parents would be willing to risk the influence of the Sunday school in preference to that of the streets, their children are just as effectually kept from the school as if forbidden by their parents to attend the sessions. The day school teacher, not the parent, is the final authority in Bulgaria. Parents rarely think of questioning decisions of the court to which they appeal for help in

The Day School Teacher Supreme



Country House Where a Sunday School is Held

case of difficulty in the matter of domestic discipline. If they do, there is no remedy. They and the children are helpless.

A Boy's A little boy of ten had attended a Methodist Sunday school for
Absence several months, this fact having escaped the day school teacher's notice. Then he became irregular. When questioned by the Sunday school teacher as to the cause of his absence, his reply was at once frankly honest, and typical of the condition of children throughout the principality—"I can't come any more.

As long as the teacher only punished me I didn't care. He can punish me if he wants to. I'd take it and come just the same. But now he says that if I come any more he will put me out of the day school." That ends attendance at the Protestant Sunday school for the boy. His parents submit to the teacher, and the boy has to stay away from Sunday school. In spite of many such obstacles, however, Sunday schools are maintained throughout the Mission. The total attendance reported even exceeds the church membership.

In the matter of finance, a few facts may be given to show what the Bulgarians are doing. For pastoral support in general, the receipts exceeded the claims in 1902-3 and in 1903-4. In the year
Finances 1904-5, only one charge fell below its apportionment. This does not include amounts needed for current expenses, nor for permanent improvements on buildings, etc. Moreover, it is not merely an occasional occurrence. Since 1901 there have been only two deficits on account of pastoral support recorded against the Mission. The Bulgaria Mission is no less prompt in meeting its obligations to the Missionary Society.

The Epworth League is represented by chapters on the leading charges. The Bulgarian is fond of a "drujestvo" (society). In the local chapters of the League, the Bulgarian Methodist
The Epworth Church finds efficient allies in enlisting and holding the
League young people. Their meetings attract and win. Concerning the League prayer-meetings of the town where he lived, a young man said: "I can do without anything else, but I can't keep away from those prayer-meetings of the League." One of these Bulgarian chapters has recently celebrated its tenth anniversary. Its beginning was modest indeed. The first year it was a greater distinction to be an unofficial member than otherwise; for there were only three more members than were required to fill the offices. The chap-

**A Thrifty
Chapter**

ter has steadily grown, and now, in spite of stringent rules prohibiting drinking, smoking, games of chance, and questionable amusements, and after a rigid pruning, it has a membership of sixty, and is a strong, thrifty chapter, able to meet scrutiny in any department. Probably nowhere is it more difficult to secure admission to membership, are applications more closely scrutinized, and applicants kept longer in probationary waiting. The "membership contest" has never been heard of in Bulgaria. As a result, membership in the Epworth League is acknowledged proof of good character,



An Epworth League Basket Picnic

admitted alike by friend or enemy. This chapter maintains all the departments, according to the plans of the Central Office, doing efficient work in each. During 1904-5 "Sunrise in the Sunrise Kingdom" was adopted as a text-book for mission study. Of necessity, the work

Mission Study

of the Mission Study Class in Bulgaria was less comprehensive than the full possibilities contemplated by the Young People's Department of the Missionary Society.

These Bulgarian Epworthians have not the libraries for side-reading, so suggestively arranged by the Department. Only a minority of them can do anything with English. But they have what helps materially in the final outcome of any undertaking—good organization, purpose and persistence. In addition, for several years the League has maintained a flourishing weekly Bible Study Class, using the reg-

ular League text-books. The same chapter, through private work and individual giving, made an offering of \$50 for the Twentieth Century Fund.

The auxiliaries of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society in Bulgaria have a Conference organization. Following an arrangement of some years' standing, funds raised on the field are ex-

Woman's Foreign expended in local
Missionary Society Bible work.

For this reason, they have not figured in the reports published at home. Since the beginning of the Conference organization, a total of over \$500 has been raised by these native auxiliaries, and the annual amount has steadily increased. From the beginning, these contributions for native Bible work have averaged over one-third of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society's annual appropriation for the work, and for several years past the annual contribution has been more than one-half the amount appropriated for Bible work by the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society. All of this money is used in native Bible work. One auxiliary has made an annual gift of \$20 to the Conference organization, regarding that merely as its "dues," and whatever it can raise over and above that sum it gives as "special work." During 1904-5 its "special work" and its "dues" made a total of \$45. The book of the Conference Treasurer of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society shows that twelve out of the sixteen charges report annually.

Colportage is one of the most efficient means of reaching a people situated as the Bulgarians are to-day. The Mission keeps one man continuously at work, and when the funds permit additional work is



Miss M. V. Raicheva,
Secretary Bulgarian Conference
Woman's Foreign Missionary Society

done. In July, 1905, a second colporteur was put into the field temporarily, and his success was so great that it was difficult to keep him supplied with books. It is a pity that he cannot be kept steadily at work. Traveling on foot, with a donkey to carry the supplies, he has canvassed localities hitherto practically untouched. Everywhere he has found people ready to listen and to buy Bibles, Testaments and the Gospels.

While Bulgarian officialdom and the priesthood everywhere stubbornly oppose the advance of Protestant faith, the people themselves, with a few exceptions, are receptive and even kindly

**Receptiveness
of the People**

disposed. Many incidents might be related, showing their friendly attitude and their openness to conviction.

A little party of Methodists, while on a recent excursion to an old monastery, stopped in a village to visit the shop of a maker of wooden

**A Bottle-
Maker's
Bible**

walled shop. While the missionaries were discussing wooden water-hottles with him, they noticed a Bible lying on a shelf. As the man was not a Protestant, the mere presence of the Book was sufficiently striking to justify inquiry. He readily explained

its presence. Some time before, a soldier returning from service had brought to the village the story of the Gospel and a copy of the Bible. Having little else to read, some of the villagers became interested in reading this Bible, and among the number was the bottle-maker. Its words were found so different from the practice and precept of the priests that the simple-minded villagers concluded it could not be the real Bible. (It was in common Bulgarian; as already noted, the Bible used by the Orthodox Church is in ancient Slavic.) The hottle-maker was above the average in intelligence. He could read both

**The
Two Bibles
Alike**

Bulgarian and Slavic. To settle the dispute, he obtained a copy for himself and made a comparison. The Bibles, Bulgarian and Slavic, proved alike, verse for verse, and imme-



A Colporteur

diately the people of the village wanted Bibles. They had not known before that there was a Bible in Bulgaria. Again the bottle-maker sent to buy some books, and when found by our Methodists he had sold thirty Bibles and wanted to get more. The village where these Bibles were bought so eagerly lies on the very borders of a monastery.



Methodist Episcopal Church at Varna

A Priest's Complaint After some of our Methodists had been holding informal out-of-doors Sunday schools among the children for a few months, a priest was overheard complaining that the people did not receive him well. To use his own words: "I went with the holy water at Eordanov-den (the day on which the water is blessed) and for my whole day's work got only a few stotenkas." (A stot-enka is one-fifth of a cent.) "But when these Protestants go out

there the people fairly flock around them. The children are learning verses from the Bible and are singing their Protestant songs everywhere. Already they care nothing for the holy water. Soon they will all be Protestants."

Either
Protestantism
or Infidelity

The priest was far nearer the truth than he realized. Soon these people will be Protestants—or else godless infidelity will rule. That is the choice that lies before Bulgaria to-day. Her people are fast losing their once blind faith in the Orthodox Church. Even the villagers are beginning to learn the futility of a religion that is "done" by the priest for everyone, for a consideration. The paths are now open. Into which shall Bulgaria be led? If left to herself, she will inevitably take the easy road that leads to modern skepticism. Her young people are entering it every day. It is their natural tendency by way of reaction.

The Present
Urgency

If Bulgaria is ever to enter the other path, if her men and women of to-day, her youth and her children are ever to know the way of salvation by faith in a living Christ, the Christian Church must give them the opportunity now. Even to-day the Gospel is almost as unknown to the individual Bulgarian as to the Hindu. Is it any the less real missionary work to offer it to him though he lives in a corner of Europe and possesses the doubtful blessing of an alleged Christian Church?

A Work Well
Started

The Congregational Church, by extending its Macedonian work northward, is endeavoring to give the Gospel message to the people of Southern Bulgaria. In Northern Bulgaria the Methodist Episcopal Church has to-day the responsibility and the opportunity. Will she accept and use them? The pioneering has been done. The work is well started. In this garden vineyard of our Church shall the fruitage be abundant, overflowing? Shall there be in Bulgaria a worthy offering unto Him whose children its people are? There is no question as to the possibility. The harvest is as certain in Bulgaria as elsewhere, but here also, as elsewhere, it is not without cost.

First, if this Bulgaria Mission is to win its harvest, if it is to do the utmost possible in its ingathering of redeemed souls, the whole Church must desire the harvest—not merely the four American missionaries and the little group of native helpers on the field, not only

the Bishops, nor the Missionary Secretaries, nor the occasional preacher or layman who may have become interested in this Mission. Nothing less than the unconquerable desire of the whole Church, individually and collectively, can suffice.

And the whole Church must pray, fervently and effectually, for this object of its wish. Then, united in wish, united in prayer,



Lovetich Methodist Church and Parsonage

the whole Church deliberately planning to do its part with all possible wisdom and grace, an abundant harvest is assured. Can the Church expect a full harvest on any mission field on conditions less than these?

Second, the Mission must no longer be allowed to suffer the uncertainty, or rather the certain effects of a vacillating policy. Its reason for existence is admitted, and the principle of its continuance affirmed. A superintendent has been appointed and sent to the Mission. Let him be loyally upheld both at home and on the field.

Certain important needs on the field are most urgent. One of these is an adequate supply of all kinds of church literature, especially of Bibles, Testaments and Gospels. Adequate facilities for printing ought also to be provided. Another imperative need is a boys' school. Not necessarily of college grade, but equal to the grade of the national schools, so arranged that parents wishing to guard their boys from the skeptical influences of the government schools, could secure for them the elementary grades at least, without being obliged to send them to the schools of the Congregational Mission in the south. There is no objection to helping a sister Mission, but the Methodist Episcopal Church should plan to provide for its own. Such a school would be a feeder into the All-Europe Methodist Episcopal School, plans for which are now forming in the busy brain of Bishop Burt. At present there is absolutely no provision made in the Mission for the training of workers, except by the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society.

Another urgent need is to secure headquarters at Sofia, the capital. It is a decided disadvantage to the Mission that it has no work at Sofia, and is in no way officially represented there. This is a growing city; it is the government capital, where the civilization of Europe is fast making its appearance. The Congregational Mission maintains a station at Sofia. Following the natural tendency to go to a capital city, there is a steady drain from our constituency into that Mission. As in the case of the schools, while we cheerfully acquiesce in the gain of the Congregationalists, we cannot fail to realize our own loss.

There is abundant room at Sofia for both Missions. A central station located there would be of value to the general work, and to the executive administration of the Mission as the present headquarters are not, and owing to their situation cannot be. There is a constantly recurring need for communication with the central government. Methodist Mission headquarters at Sofia would mean a far better standing and better recognition. It would help to secure relief from the endless complications and official restrictions that seriously hinder the growth of our work.

